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Herons at Home

BY WILLIAM L. FINLEY

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY HERMAN T. BOHLMAN

FIFTEEN miles below Portland, Oregon, in the heart of the fir forest, is a village of two hundred houses. It has an area of about three acres. Every home is a sky-scraper. Not a single house is less than a hundred and thirty feet up, and some are a hundred and sixty feet high. The inhabitants are feathered fishers. They hunt the waterways of the Columbia and the Willamette for miles. Each owns his own claim, and there's never a dispute as to possession.

It takes the biggest reserve of nerve and muscle to reach this village, but one may sit on the wooded hillside far below and watch the life there in full swing. From two to five brush-heap houses, the size of a washtub, are carefully balanced and securely fastened on the top limbs of each tree. Gaunt, long-legged citizens stand about the airy doorways and gossip in hoarse croaks. Residents are continually coming and going, some flapping in from the feeding ground with a craw full of fish and frogs, others sweeping down the avenues between the pointed firs with a departing guttural squawk. This is the home of a colony of great blue herons.

The great blue heron or "crane" is one of the picturesque sights of every fish pond and along the bank of every river and lake in the country. I look for him, along the shallow sandbars and sloping banks as I look for the background of green trees. He is always the solitary fisher. He is the bit of life that draws the whole to a focus. Watch him, and he stands as motionless as a stick. He is patient. A minnow or frog swims past and there is a lightning flash of that pointed bill as he pins it a foot below the surface. Disturb him, and he deliberately spreads a pair of wings that fans six feet of air, and dangles his long legs to the next stand just out of range.

Nature has built the heron in an extremely practical way. She dressed him in colors of sky and water. She did not plant his eyes in the top of his head, as she did the woodcock's, because he is not likely to be injured by enemies from above; but she put them right on the lower sloping side of his head, so he could look straight down at his feet without the slightest sideturn. She let his legs grow too long for perching conveniently on a tree, just so he could wade in deep enough to fish. She gave him a dagger-shaped bill at the end of a neck that was long enough to reach bottom, as well as to keep his eyes high above water so he could see and aim correctly at the creature below the surface.

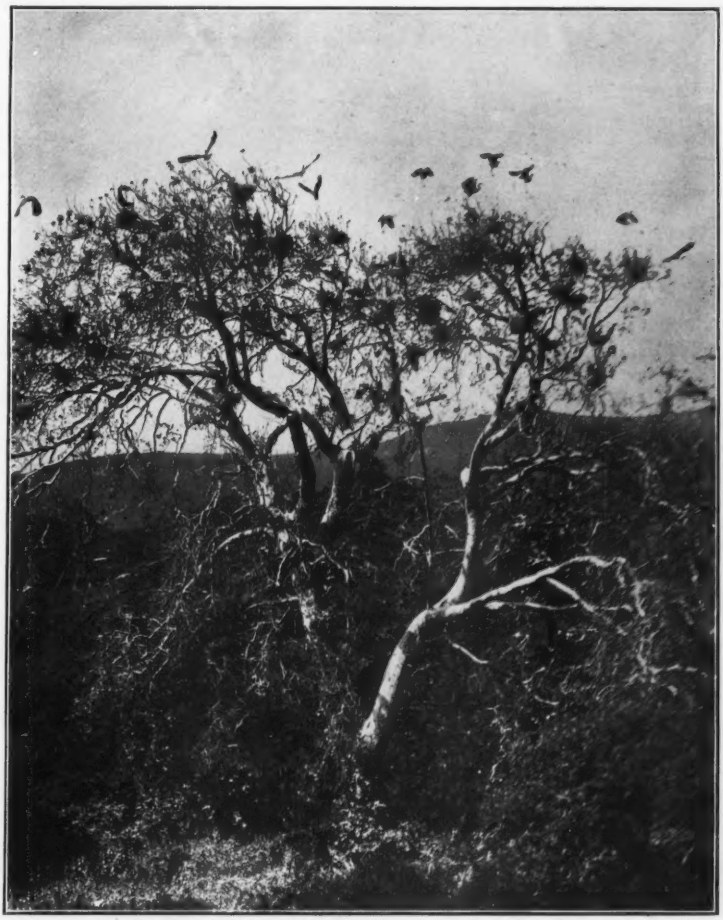
The great blue heron is a remarkable fellow in adapting himself to circumstances. In a bird of such long legs and of such proportions one would naturally think his nesting place would be on the ground, and in regions where they have been undisturbed this is his favorite site. In the lake region of Southern Oregon we found the colonies of great blue herons nesting on the floating tule islands, surrounded on all sides with gulls, cormorants, pelicans and terns. In other parts of Oregon and in California we have found colonies of these same birds living in the tallest firs deep back in the forest, or in the sycamores and willows in the midst of a swamp.

During the summer of 1904, while in California, we made several different trips to a heronry not very far distant from the densely populated district about San Francisco. This heronry was in the center of a narrow wooded belt reaching out into the swamp for about a mile. When we approached this thicket we saw the trees were well loaded with nests. We skirted the edge of the belt looking for an entrance, but to our surprise each place we tried to enter was barred with a perfect mass of tangled bushes and trees. We crawled thru in one place for a few feet, but over all and thru all was a mass of poison oak and blackberry that one could not penetrate. There was not the sign of a path. After hunting for two hours, we went to the point opposite the largest tree and decided to push and cut our way thru. The first few yards we crawled on hands and knees, pushing our cameras or dragging them behind. Unable to crawl further, we had to clear a way and climb a ten-foot brush heap. For a few yards we ducked under and wiggled along the bed of a ditch in the mire to our knees. I never saw such a tangled mass of brush. Fallen limbs and trees of alder, swamp-maple and willow interlaced with blackberry briers, poison oak and the rankest growth of nettles. All the while we were assailed by an increasing mob of starving mosquitoes that went raving mad at the taste of blood. We pushed on, straining, sweating, crawling and climbing for a hundred yards that seemed more like a mile.

We forgot it all the minute we stood under the largest sycamore. It was seven feet thick at the base, and a difficult proposition to climb. But this was the center of business activity in the heron village. The monster was a hundred and twenty feet high and had a spread of limbs equal to its height. In this single tree we counted forty-one blue heron nests and twenty-eight night heron nests: sixty-nine nests in one tree. In another tree were seventeen of the larger nests and twenty-eight of the smaller.

We made the first trip to the heronry on April 21, and found most of the nests contained eggs. There were about 700 nests in the whole colony, of which the larger number were black-crowned night herons. The great blues and the night herons occupied the same trees, nesting side by side. The larger nests were built almost entirely in the tops of the sycamores, while the night herons set their platform nests at the very upturned tips of the sycamore's limbs and in the lower surrounding willows and alders.

When I first climbed in among the nests of a smaller tree with my camera, it sounded as if I were in the midst of a gigantic henhouse. Some of the birds were clucking over their eggs that were soon to be hatched; others were wrangling and squabbling, so that there was a continual clattering fuss above which one had to yell his loudest to be heard. I sat straddling a limb, with my notebook in hand.



THE LARGEST TREE IN THE HERON VILLAGE, CONTAINING 69 NESTS, 41 NESTS OF THE GREAT BLUE HERON AND 28 OF THE BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

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About me, seemingly almost within reach, I counted thirty-six sets of blue eggs. I was high above the tops of the alders and willows. Set all about below, in the background of green, were the platforms each holding several eggs of blue. The trees were dotted with them in every direction. I counted over 400 eggs in sight,

The black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nævius*) is a very different looking bird from the great blue (*Ardea herodias*). It has a shiny black patch on the top of the head, a gray body with a black back. The short but thick neck and short legs are just the opposite to the blue heron.

Great blue herons perched lazily in the tops of all the trees. Looking in one direction I counted over a hundred of them. They were sailing in continually

HALF-GROWN BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON, SHOWING LONG ANGULAR TOES WHICH ARE WELL ADAPTED TO CLINGING IN THE TREE TOPS

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and departing. The night herons fluttered about in a jerky, labored flight, lighting in the willows and hovering over their nests.

A night heron's, or, as often called, a *squawk's* nest, looks to me like a mere botch. Some of them are not hollowed in the least, but just rough platforms. In a wind, the eggs would roll off if the mother did not sit to hold them on. There is not much trouble after the eggs are hatched, for the youngsters seem to kick them-

selves loose from the shell with one foot, while they wrap the long, angular toes of the other about the nearest twig.

The next time I sat in the tree top the place sounded more like a big duck ranch. Above all the squawks of the parents there was a steady quacking clatter of the hundreds of young herons, that never ceased. The sound grew more intense in spots, as here and there a mother swept in from the feeding ground and fed her children. As I sat watching, an old blue heron sailed in and lit on a branch above her nest in the adjoining tree. The three youngsters twisted in

YOUNG NIGHT HERONS HANGING DEAD 20 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND, AND PHOTOGRAPHED EXACTLY AS FOUND

The left-hand bird has fallen and caught by its foot in a crotch, thus hanging itself. The right-hand bird has merely the chin hooked over the limb; its right foot shows how in the death struggle it was clutching for a limb.

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ecstatic contortions as the mother stepped awkwardly along the limb. Each reached up in full height to grasp her long bill. She sat on the nest, calmly looking about. The young continued to catch her long beak and pull it part way down, endeavoring to make her feed them. When she got ready, she disgorged a mess of partially digested fish down the throat of each nestling and left as leisurely as she came. In another case, where the young were older, I saw the mother bird disgorge into the nest. The mass of undigested fish in her craw seemed to form into small portions and come up as the cud of a cow does, and each youngster

pitched into the meal with a vigor and energy that would have amazed a litter of young pigs.

When you climb anywhere near a nest after the youngsters have had a good meal, they will begin to "unswallow" as fast as they have gobbled it down. On account of this habit, especially common among the young night herons, we found it always safe to keep out of the way as much as possible, or at least not approach a nest full of young birds from below.

A young night heron is well adapted to climbing from limb to limb by reason of his long, angling toes and the ability to hook his neck or bill, over a limb and draw himself up as a parrot does. Not so with the young blue herons; they are as awkward about the limbs of the trees as their parents are stately in moving thru the air. When overbalanced on a limb, they often fall to the ground.

The young birds of both species seem instinctively to know that falling from the trees to the ground below means death. Not because they are hurt in the least by the fall, but because the old birds never descend to the ground beneath the nest-tree. The ground under the trees was strewn with the dead bodies of young birds. The young are fed only in the tree top and those below starve in the very sight of their parents.

Several times we saw young night herons hanging dead in the branches of the trees. In one tree we found two of these youngsters hanging side by side only a foot apart. In walking about the limbs, the larger of the two birds had caught its foot in a crotch and hung itself head downward. That, in itself, was not unusual, but the second bird hung by the neck only a few inches away. It seems that this smaller heron had hung himself dead, rather than fall to the ground; he had fallen or overbalanced on the small limb and, as is the custom, had hooked his chin over the branch to keep from falling to the ground. His clutched right foot showed that the death struggle had been a reaching and clutching to gain the limb. The head was not caught between the branches as the other bird's foot, but was simply hooked over a bend in the twig. Had he thrown his head back a trifle, he would have dropped to the ground. We demonstrated this by turning the bill to an ankle of forty-five degrees and it dropped to the bushes twenty feet below. How the bird could have held the rigid position of the neck thruout its death struggle, I do not understand, unless it was a case where the force of instinct was strong even to death.

Portland, Oregon.

The Hermit Warbler in Washington

BY J. H. BOWLES

AN experience covering eight years in northwestern Washington has convinced me that the hermit warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*) is a regular summer resident. The bird student however, must consider himself doubly fortunate if he can find some easily accessible location where he can study these birds at any time thruout the summer, for it is far from common even in the most favored districts and is exceedingly local in distribution. As an example, I may quote Mr. S. F. Rathbun, of Seattle, who tells me that *D. occidentalis* is practically unknown in his locality. On the contrary, around Tacoma the birds are of regular occurrence as summer residents, altho the two places are only twenty-five miles apart, and are situated at the same altitude and on the same body of water.

The hermits make their first appearance early in May and the fact is only to be known thru their notes; for they frequent the tops of the giant firs which cover large sections of our flat prairie country. The song was described by my brother, Mr. C. W. Bowles, while summering in the mountains of southern Oregon, and later quoted in an article by the late Chester Barlow. It consists of four distinct notes, as a rule, and is described as, "zeegle-zeegle, zeegle-zeek," uttered somewhat slowly at first but ending rather sharply.

About the middle of July both young and old assemble in good-sized flocks and frequent the water holes in the smaller growths of timber. At such times I have never seen them associating with any other kinds of birds.

In the midst of the dense foliage of the fir branches, and at a distance of from two hundred to three hundred feet from the ground, these birds cannot be satisfactorily studied even with the aid of the best glasses. They are so small and active that one is continually losing them, and it was only by the merest accident that I happened on a method of getting into close touch with them. I had found a nest of the Cassin vireo containing young, and stood watching the different small birds that always gather to inquire into the vigorous scolding of these most solicitous of parents. Suddenly from the towering firs overhead a small bird swooped down and joined the rest, soon to be followed by another. My suspicions were immediately aroused, and, carefully keeping them distinguished from the others, the black throat and yellow hermit's cowl quickly identified the newcomers as male and female *D. occidentalis*. Soon they became the most inquisitive of all, and hopping close around me were truly "the observed of all observers."

It was on this occasion that I noticed a peculiar habit of these warblers, and my brother has since seen them do the same thing. After examining me closely and apparently deciding that I was a new kind of stump, the female commenced feeding, but her attention was soon attracted to a last year's nest of the russet-backed thrush. She at once flew to it and, hopping in, crouched down and commenced trampling the bottom, turning around, putting the material on the sides into shape with her bill, and altogether acting as if she had nest-building well under way. This was about the middle of May and, as I subsequently discovered, almost a month too early for her to lay her eggs. Nevertheless the nest was carefully watched, tho with no further results.

Their food consists of small spiders, caterpillars, tiny beetles, and flying insects which they dart out and capture in a manner worthy of that peer of flycatchers the Audubon warbler.

What might be called a typical nesting site is purely a matter of conjecture, though the few nests that have been taken in California were built rather low down. In Washington, however, it is probable that the nest is placed one hundred or more feet up in the great Douglas firs. The only nest I have ever seen, either old or new—the nest cannot be mistaken for anything else—was found during the past season, on June 11th, 1905. I was looking for nests of the black-throated gray warbler in a grove of young hundred-foot firs near a small swamp, when I caught sight of what looked to be a typical nest of the Audubon warbler on an overhead limb. The bird's tail showed plainly over the edge of the nest, and while climbing up I was surprised that she did not come to meet me as *D. auduboni* always does. Instead she allowed me to sit on the limb and look down at her, and my feelings may be better imagined than described when, instead of the small yellow-crown patch of an Audubon, I saw the lemon-yellow head of a hermit. She sat so close that I was forced to lift her from the nest with my hand; and she then flew only a few feet where she remained chipping and spreading her

wings and tail. Mr. Ed L. Currier, of Tacoma, was with me and the bird did not seem at all afraid of either of us. The male did not appear at any time, which is surprising as he is usually in close attendance upon his mate.

The nest was placed twenty feet from the ground in a young fir, and was securely saddled on a good sized limb at a distance of six feet from the trunk of the tree. It is a compact structure composed externally of small dead fir twigs, various kinds of dry moss, and down from the cotton-wood flowers, showing a strong outward resemblance to nests of *D. auduboni.* But here the likeness between the two is at an end; for the lining consists of fine dried grasses, and horsehair, with only a single feather from the wing of a western bluebird. The measurements are, externally, four inches in diameter and two and three-quarters inches deep; internally, two inches in diameter by one and a quarter inches deep.

The eggs, which are five in number, were incubated about four days. They have a rather dull white ground with the slightest suggestion of flesh color, heavily blotched and spotted with varying shades of red, brown and lavender. Their dimensions in inches are .68 x .53, .69 x .52, .69 x .52, .69 x .53 and .69 x .53.

Without any of a rather natural partiality on account of their rarity, I think they may be considered the handsomest of all the warbler's eggs.

Tacoma, Washington.

Summer Birds of San Francisco County, California

BY MILTON S. RAY

A WRITER in THE CONDOR recently stated: "San Francisco County being very small and covering not much more than the city limits, cuts but little figure ornithologically." Yet the following list of the birds found during the breeding season shows our little peninsula to be by no means devoid of bird-life, and as the county fronts on both the bay and ocean quite a formidable list of migrants and winter residents could be made. The county is nearly square in shape being about seven miles each way. The western half is only thinly populated, the Presidio Reservation, Golden Gate Park and a number of smaller districts to the south being the principal wooded sections. Introduced trees, such as pine, eucalyptus and cypress form the bulk of the timber. The balance of the unsettled portion is either barren or sparsely covered with the native scrub oak, willow or lupine bushes. Owing to the cool climate there are practically no shade trees in the city itself and as gardens of any extent are likewise scarce, the only bird which occurs and breeds within the city proper, with a very few exceptions, is the European house sparrow.

1. **Fulica americana.** American Coot. About the fresh water ponds of the park and elsewhere in the western half of the county the coot is a common breeder.

2. **Lophortyx californicus californicus.** California Partridge. A common resident especially in the park where, owing to the protection they receive, they have become exceedingly tame. Largest set of eggs noted, twenty-three.

3. **Zenaidura macroura.** Mourning Dove. A fairly abundant summer resident.

4. **Cathartes aura.** Turkey Vulture. Seen during spring and summer.

5. **Elanus leucurus.** White-tailed Kite. One seen in May, 1900.

6. **Buteo borealis calurus.** Western Red-tailed Hawk. Noticed in spring and summer as well as at other seasons.

7. **Falco sparverius.** American Sparrow Hawk. A rather common resident but I have never located any nests.

8. **Asio wilsonianus.** American Long-eared Owl. I shot one near Ingleside in May, 1892.

9. **Megascops asio bendirei.** California Screech Owl. A not uncommon resident; no nesting record.

10. **Geococcyx californianus.** Road-runner. One seen in the Golden Gate Park in May, 1891.

11. **Ceryle alcyon.** Belted Kingfisher. Sparingly resident in the southwestern corner of the county.

12. **Colaptes cafer collaris.** Red-shafted Flicker. A fairly numerous resident; no nesting record.

13. **Calypte anna.** Anna Hummingbird. A very common resident; many nesting records.

14. **Selasphorus rufus.** Rufous Hummingbird. Observed in spring and early summer; no nesting records.

15. **Selasphorus alleni.** Allen Hummingbird. Not uncommon during the summer; no nesting record.

16. **Sayornis nigricans.** Black Phoebe. Fairly abundant resident about the ponds and lakelets in the park as well as elsewhere in the county. I have found it nesting at several points. Several times I have noticed a pair of these birds about the wharves at North Beach.

17. **Empidonax difficilis.** Western Flycatcher. Very rare; I found a single nest in May, 1892, placed among the overhanging bark strips of an Australian gum tree (Eucalyptis) in the park.

18. **Otocoris alpestris actia.** California Horned Lark. I have seen these birds near Ocean View at the county line where a few probably breed.

19. **Aphelocoma californica californica.** California Jay. The jay is a rather common resident but their numbers are diminishing within the park limits on account of the war waged on these birds by the officials. Several nesting records.

20. **Corvus americanus hesperis.** California Crow. The crow is an extremely common bird on the opposite shores of Marin county and quite a few stray across the bay to the docks along the water front, the Presidio Reservation, and at times the Park. I do not believe any nest within the county, however.

21. **Sturnella neglecta.** Western Meadowlark. Seen near Golden Gate Park on several occasions, but more common in the fields near Ocean View where a few perhaps breed.

22. **Icterus bullocki.** Bullock Oriole. A rare summer visitant; nesting doubtful.

23. **Euphagus cyanocephalus.** Brewer Blackbird. It seems strange that this bird so common in all the adjacent counties should only be an irregular visitor wholly absent some years.

24. **Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis.** House Finch. A very common summer resident; many nests observed.

25. **Astragalinus tristis salicamans.** Willow Goldfinch. A fairly abundant bird in the summer; found nesting.

26. **Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus.** Green-backed Goldfinch. A common breeder.

27. **Passer domesticus.** European House Sparrow. Naturally the commonest bird in the populated districts; but I think their numbers in the park and balance of the county are exceeded by that of the following species.

28. **Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli.** Nuttall Sparrow. This is the charac-

teristic species of the county, and in the districts sparsely wooded or covered with lupine bushes it is frequently the only bird met with. A very common bird thruout the Park and Presidio Reservation, and strays also to the public squares and larger gardens in the vicinity. Nests are placed in lupine bushes or low situations in scrub oaks or pines altho occasionally as high as 30 feet up and sometimes on the ground. I have noted fresh eggs from April 1 to July 24. The percentage of infertile eggs runs very high. Eggs show great variation in size and color, some specimens being finely and thickly dotted and others heavily blotched with chocolate or light brown, obscuring the ground color, while another type is pale greenish-blue more or less heavily spotted and blotched with liver-brown frequently in the form of a circle around the larger end.

29. **Melospiza cinerea santæcrucis.** Santa Cruz Song Sparrow. A common resident in the western half of the county especially about the fresh water ponds and lakes. I have also seen it at times in public squares in the heart of the city. Nests on the ground or in bushes a few feet up.

30. **Melospiza pusillula.** Salt Marsh Song Sparrow. Found sparingly in the marshy tracts in the southeastern corner of the county along the bay shore.

31. **Pipilo maculatus falcifer.** San Francisco Towhee. Common resident; nests in low bushes, scrub oaks or willows, or among overhanging blackberry vines. I have never found a nest placed on the ground, except once.

32. **Zamelodia melanocephala.** Black-headed Grosbeak. Scarce at all seasons; no nesting record.

33. **Hirundo erythrogastra.** Barn Swallow.

34. **Petrochelidon lunifrons.** Cliff Swallow. Both observed during the breeding season but the nesting of either within the county is questionable.

35. **Lanius ludovicianus gambeli.** California Shrike. But very seldom seen; no nesting record. Several times during the fall I have noticed it on the city streets.

36. **Vireo gilvus swainsoni.** Western Warbling Vireo. Noticed during the summer; no nesting record.

37. **Dendroica æstiva brewsteri.** California Yellow Warbler. Common summer resident, nesting usually in willows in the vicinity of water.

38. **Wilsonia pusilla chryseola.** Golden Pileolated Warbler. Summer resident, not numerous; no nesting record.

39. **Troglodytes aedon parkmani.** Parkman Wren. Rather scarce summer resident; no nesting record.

40. **Bæolophus inornatus.** Plain Titmouse. Rare; I found a single nest of this species in a tin can lodged in a pine tree, in May, 1892. It contained six eggs.

41. **Chamæa fasciata intermedia.** Intermediate Wren-tit. A not abundant resident; more frequently heard than seen. No nesting record.

42. **Psaltriparus minimus minimus.** California Bush-tit. A very common resident, nesting abundantly in scrub oaks and gum trees of the park and elsewhere. I have found completed nests as early as February 22, and fresh eggs the first week of March.

43. **Hylocichla ustulata ustulata.** Russet-backed Thrush. A common summer resident, principally in the park; several nesting records.

44. **Sialia mexicana occidentalis.** Western Bluebird. I have noticed but a single pair of these birds, and these, strange to say, were occupying a bird box on a pole in the yard of a residence in a thickly populated section known as "The Mission," March 1903.

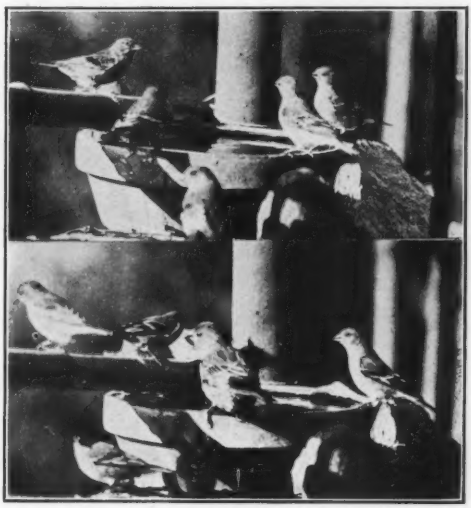
San Francisco, Cal.

Summer Notes From a Santa Barbara Garden

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD

NEVER before has it been my good fortune to have such an opportunity to observe the birds in their relation to what might be called artificially natural conditions—such as a garden well-supplied with water in a dry country presents—as the past summer has afforded. A severe attack of pneumonia in the spring made an idle summer a necessity, and Santa Barbara was chosen as the place for my convalescence.

During my previous sojourn in this locality bird life had been remarkably scarce on account of previous dry seasons. The rainy season of 1904-5, however, was a generous one, and in consequence the whole country put on a glorious aspect of prosperity. The insect world appreciated this and luxuriated in it. In turn the birds not only appeared in unusual quantities but the spring residents worked early and late, and most successfully, at rearing large families while the good time lasted.



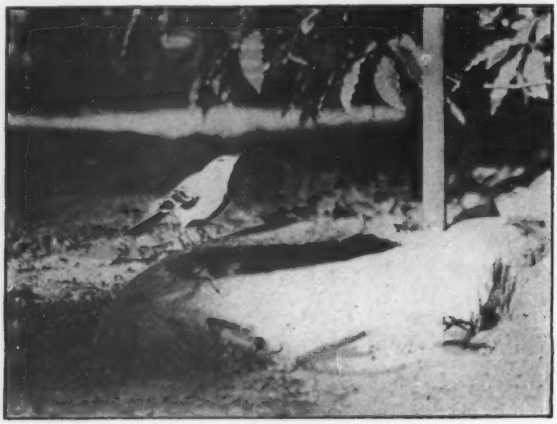
GREEN-BACKED GOLDFINCHES

During the early summer birds were everywhere, busy as bees, and seemed reluctant to commence their southern journey when the time was ripe. As water was running in the streams until well into the summer such things as artificial pools were not greatly in demand at once, but as the season waxed and waned and the streams dried up, the feathered tribe became more and more appreciative of what kind-hearted and interested people did for them in the way of supplying liquid refreshments to the thirsty multitudes. Then it was that such things as old Indian mortars under dripping hydrants became exceedingly popular, and, in fact, any leaky spot in an exposed pipe and every dropping faucet in a place even if only at intervals undisturbed by people passing, had its patrons. It was no unusual thing to see a line of green-backed goldfinches, for instance, awaiting their turn to hang upside down on the faucet and let the cooling water fall into their open bills, drop by drop. And often the drops came very slowly.

Around these oases where the birds gathered, many interesting sights were to be seen, and the traits of different species could be readily compared. Even individual characteristics could occasionally be distinguished. During the absence of larger birds the Anthony towhee (*Pipilo fuscus senicula*) was the "boss," and while in possession of a drinking fount it behooved smaller birds to stand aloof. Often one of these towhees would hop on that particular Indian mortar where most of my observations were carried on, doing everything very deliberately, take

a sip of water and then take a rest, another sip and another rest, finally settling himself in the water for a good bath. After splashing about to his heart's content he would come out to preen himself for awhile, and if no other birds were about would take his departure in due course of time. But if smaller birds came around he would repeat the whole performance, while perhaps around him—but not *too* near—stood a thirsty group of house finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*), and the bush overhanging the bowl supported an equally impatient crowd of green-backed goldfinches (*Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus*). The poor things often had to wait a good long while, and now and again a more adventurous one would dare to approach the water only to receive a vigorous attack from Mr. Towhee for his temerity. It was a veritable case of "dog in the manger."

The most amusing of all the birds noted in this garden were the wren-tits (*Chamæa fasciata*). These little fellows seemed to be actually clown-like in their antics, and in this spot had but little fear of human beings, often feeding within three or four feet of persons who were sitting comparatively still, tho perhaps



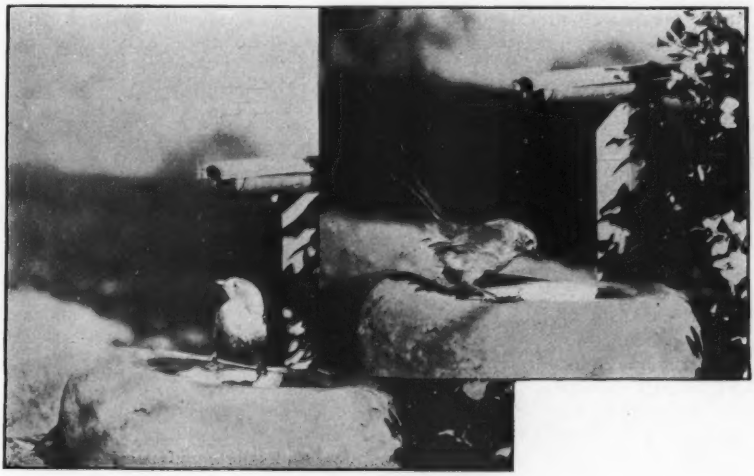
MOCKINGBIRD SWALLOWING

conversing in an ordinary tone of voice. The berries of the pepper tree seemed to have a great attraction for them and they would stuff themselves with these until it seemed as if they would burst. And apparently the berries made them very thirsty, for they would often stop the stuffing process long enough to fly to the nearest water for a drink.

Close to the ground and near one of the pepper trees under which I often sat in the afternoons was a two-inch fire hydrant which was at such a height that a wren-tit standing on tiptoes could just reach up to it. The leakage was almost imperceptible, but it was enough for a sip or two every now and again. Apparently a special pair and their young—or perhaps friends—claimed ownership to this hydrant, and visited it frequently when indulging in pepper berries. Any person having the temerity to place himself within five or six feet of this private drinking place was sure to receive a terrific scolding from the whilom owners, but by moving my chair gradually and keeping very quiet I succeeded in sitting not over three feet away without preventing the birds from making use of it, tho they always made a good deal of fuss before approaching and never tarried very

long in such close proximity to man. I tried to get a photograph of one standing on tiptoes and stretching his neck to reach up for a drop, but the sun did not strike the spot until its rays were too weak to get anything satisfactory and all my attempts were failures.

Yet bright as these wren-tits seemed in some ways they showed a good deal of stupidity, in common with several other species, in another way. The Indian mortar shown in the cut of my first attempt at photographing birds (THE CONDOR, Vol. VII, No. 6, p. 179) was much resorted to by many birds; but as the summer waned and the sun southed it was too much in the shade for the use of the camera, except for a very little while in the afternoon when perhaps a mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos leucopterus*) might happen along in a thirsty mood at the proper moment when the sun struck it, most of the others coming too early or too late for the sunshine. I conceived the idea of putting another mortar, this one being too heavy to move, a short distance away but in the sun for some hours at a stretch—



WREN-TITS GETTING READY TO BATHE

and leading the water to it. This new mortar was placed about four feet away from, but in plain sight of the old one, and yet the customary visitors could not become accustomed to the change for a long while. They would come to the old place, jump into the bowl tho not a drop of water was in it, jump out again, stand on the edge and appear perplexed only to repeat the whole performance over and over again; and yet they would not go to the new place but four feet off where the water was dripping musically all day long. Some individuals would hop down into the old mortar and go thru the motions of taking a bath, actually raising dust from the dry sediment as they fluttered their wings, and did not have sense enough to know better, apparently. At first this holding aloof from the new watering place struck me as being perhaps due to fear of it, but this was not really the case as there was nothing there to cause such a feeling, and the only conclusion possible was that it was either dense stupidity on the part of the birds or else utter inability to believe that such a change in conditions could have taken place.

The wren-tits were the first to get accustomed to the new state of affairs, but

even they would take a drink at the new bowl and then hurry back to the old one two or three times before they would decide to take a regular bath in the new. In the cut (the third in this article) the queer perpendicular line at the right shoulder of the bird showing full front is a drop falling from the bamboo used to lead the water from the hydrant.

In another part of the grounds was a small mortar under the drip of a faucet which was mostly in the shade. This was on a lawn under some large pine trees, where there were chairs, a hammock, etc., and usually people reading or chatting in rather close proximity to it; and yet it was a much sought-after watering and bathing place for certain birds. The bowl was comparatively deep tho of small diameter, and the smaller visitors performed their ablutions rather hurriedly in consequence, their actions giving one the idea of falling in and scrambling out again time after time. As they could not touch bottom with their feet this was in fact just what they did, tho of course not by accident.

The most interesting frequenter of this particular spot was a Pasadena thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum pasadenense*). Somehow one not living in the habitat of thrashers does not associate them with such things as baths, after meeting them principally out on sage-brush plains and far away from all water; and it always gave me a feeling of surprise to see one of these birds which had grown comparatively tame in the garden, giving himself the luxury of a cold plunge. He would not pay any attention to a person sitting quietly twenty-five or thirty feet away, tho always on the alert for any movement or approach on the part of the observer.

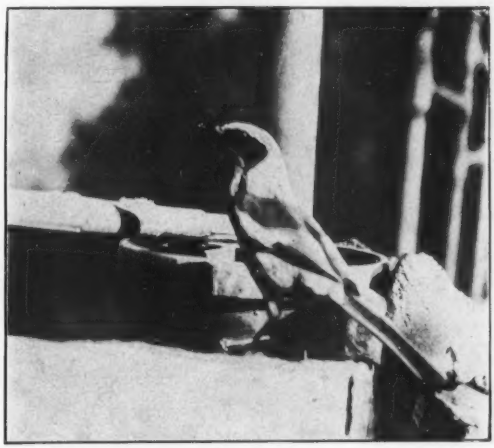
On several occasions I came upon him suddenly as he was whacking away with his curved bill, making the dirt fly as he sought some dainty tid-bit in the loose earth of the garden bed, and it was comical to see him make a jump for the nearest protection, no matter how ridiculously inadequate it might be. Once, for instance, I came upon him at a distance of not over ten feet, when he immediately jumped for the stem of a rose bush not more than three quarters of an inch in diameter and perfectly straight. He snuggled up close behind this and seemed to believe himself absolutely hidden as he made no effort to move until I approached to half the distance when he darted away. Whether it was only one individual of this species in the garden or more that I constantly saw, there was no means of telling, but there were never two seen at once, and I believed that there was only one. Even late in the fall he would perch in the top of a tree and sing most gloriously.

In September some mockingbirds arrived and tried to rival our thrasher's song, and many times none of us dense mortals could distinguish which bird was giving us such a treat, many small bets being made as to the identity of the songsters. I seldom was sure myself unless I had my eye fixed on the performer.

Once in a vacant lot nearby I heard a thrasher singing away on the top of a live oak, when some California woodpeckers alighted in the top of a neighboring sycamore and commenced their queer chattering to each other. Immediately I noticed a refrain in the thrasher's song which was a good imitation of the woodpeckers' notes. This seemed to please him so much that even after the woodpeckers had ceased their chatter and had flown away he kept repeating the imitation, weaving it in and out of his song, as it were. Wishing to be dead sure of the identity of the songster I crept close up to the tree and had the satisfaction of watching Mr. Thrasher for some minutes before he espied me. One of my great regrets of the past summer is that the above mentioned bathing place of the thrasher was so much in the shade

that it was impossible to get a photograph of him without a focal plane shutter, which I could not find in the town. Well, some other time—perhaps!

In contra-distinction to the experiment of changing the watering place of the birds was one of educating them up to a better one without changing its location. Along a stone wall supporting a road in an unoccupied place adjoining, was a hydrant that dripped very, very slightly; yet it was near the top of a low ridge and not much below the tops of some trees where birds could conveniently alight to rest from their wanderings. I procured a common shallow kitchen bowl, put it on the low wall and had just elevation enough to get water to it from the faucet by a piece of bamboo. Birds had long been in the habit of coming to this faucet and hanging there long enough to get a sip or two of water before giving place to the next comer. There was no shelter for the observer near, but I rigged up one by means of a clothes horse covered with some old matting and fastened to the iron railing which ran along the wall, and let the birds get used to it. In this instance they soon overcame their fear, and as the bowl was in plain sight to all



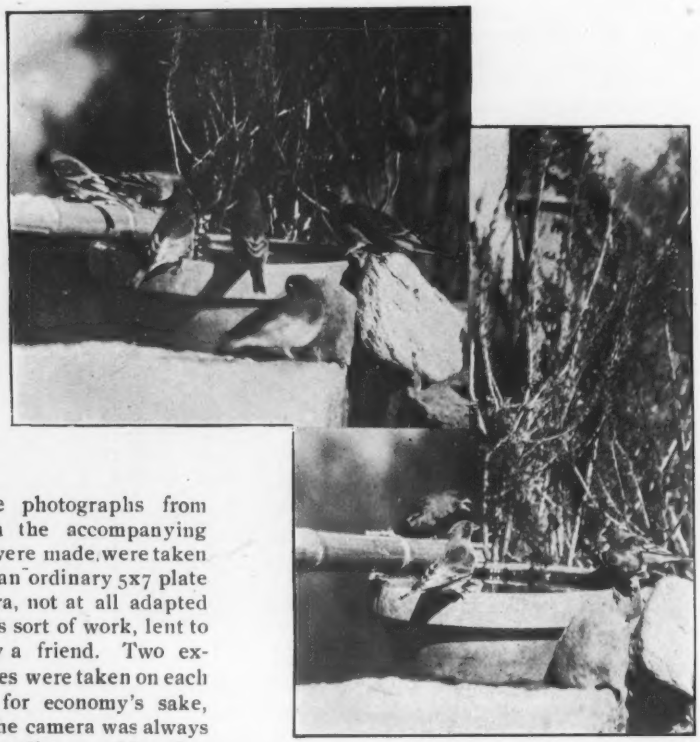
CALIFORNIA JAY

avian passers-by it was not long before it had a host of customers. These were principally green-backed goldfinches and house finches tho occasionally some other species would drop in. One Anthony towhee was a regular patron and used to hold possession for ten or fifteen minutes at a time while more timid customers waited patiently around for him to give them a chance.

A California jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) visited the spot once in a while after the bowl was established there and I had the good fortune to get a pretty fair snap at him one morning, tho he was a little too near the camera to get the best result. He was so wary, however, that it was a case of then or never. He came again several times while the camera was set and I was ready for him, but the glint of the metal parts always seemed to make him suspicious, and never again did he stay long enough or get in a sufficiently favorable position for another snap.

As the iron railing made of 2-inch pipe was very unsightly in a picture it seemed feasible to decorate the perpendicular portion in the center of the background with sage-brush and get the visitors accustomed to so distinct a change.

This was accomplished gradually by adding a twig or two day by day and with better results artistically. By the time, however, that all this education was finished—and it was as much an education to me as to the birds—and delayed as it was by the complete destruction of my paraphernalia by a violent gale, the days were growing short and cool and the visitors came not only less frequently but too early in the morning or too late in the afternoon for any photography, and the work had to be abandoned.



GREEN-BACKED GOLDFINCHES

The photographs from which the accompanying cuts were made were taken with an ordinary 5x7 plate camera, not at all adapted to this sort of work, lent to me by a friend. Two exposures were taken on each plate for economy's sake, and the camera was always set at a distance of four feet from the center of the bowl or mortar, as that was the nearest distance at which it would do fairly good work. While claiming no merit for these cuts they seemed of sufficient interest in the matter of the subject to warrant publishing, and I do so in the hope that others will follow out the idea of working up what can be done in this line in a dry country.

San Francisco, California.

The Habits of a Mockingbird

BY W. OTTO EMERSON

THAT wild birds respond readily to human kindness is often heard of, but not so well known to many thru personal experience. A mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos leucopterus*) came about my home place here at Haywards in November, 1904, and took up his quarters for the winter in the top of a Monterey cypress summer-house. This was nothing new, for mockingbirds had visited the place for several years past. But this one began early to show unusual freedom about the south porch, where a young grape vine grew at the corner post and bore several fine clusters of fruit. Mimus must have thought these were grown for his special benefit, for he soon found them out and by his tameness let us know his approval.

There was piled some fifteen feet away a lot of prune-tree brush where Mocky usually took up his stand after a fill of grapes, and here on the highest

MOCKINGBIRD

branch he would sing, as if to pay for the treat. Should he detach a whole grape, off he would sail to the brush pile, showing those flickering white wing-patches and tail spread fan-like. Down he would dive beneath the brush where he would remain while eating the grape, and then come hopping out from limb to limb to an upper branch, wipe his bill, preen a feather or two, and sing a thanksgiving in tender sweet notes.

This continued until the grapes were almost gone. Meantime he had become so tame that I could set up my camera on top of a small table within three feet of his grapes and snap the shutter, without his showing alarm by even a twitch of the wing or tail. Neither was he alarmed by the appearance of the black cat, Nig, about the porch at any hour of the day. He only cocked his little head to one side as tho to say, "He won't jump for me; he has been taught better." In fact Nig did not take any notice of him, taking it for granted that Mocky had a certain right to hop about the railing unmolested, to which place the bird often flew before going up into the vine to feed.

It was not long before the question arose as to what we could do to keep him

around the house after the grapes were gone. My mother came to Mocky's rescue by tying figs to the bare vine. So after that he would come to the porch for figs instead of going out to the tree some fifty yards away from the house. If a fig should fall to the floor, down he would fly for it, swallow a mouthful, then grab up the rest as if afraid to lose it, and fly to his retreat, the brush heap.

Mocky had become so confiding that we decided to try for a closer acquaintance by fastening a fig onto the end of a wire rod twenty-eight inches long. He was accustomed to make his appearance on the brush pile first, turning this way and that with a flit of his tail, and then sail to the grape-vine or railing to look about for his food. I then held out the rod with the fig and he would fairly jump for it and eat all he wanted, then back to his perch to clean up his bill. Soon the figs were gone. It was then January and we wondered what next to offer him to stay with us. Again the good mother's ideas came into play. She soaked some big prunes, and sure enough he took to them readily; but they had to be tacked to a small table, provided for the purpose, to keep him from running away with them to his preferred dining-hall.

Mocky seemed to like my mother best as he would often fly to the porch rail and then over to the back of her chair. Some days if there happened to be no fruit in sight, he would hop over the porch floor looking all around, and it made no difference where we sat, to the table or chair-back he flew and in his silent way let us know that he wanted something to eat. Later, in the month of February we noticed Mocky one day as he sat on the brush heap, twitching his head and gulping as if to eject something from his stomach. A closer inspection showed him to be disgorging the hard kernels of the pepper berries. These seemed to form the bulk of his diet on rainy days.

His eyes were ever alert for bugs or other insects. He would make off after them much after the manner of a shrike; in fact, so much so, that many small birds around the brush pile would make a dive for its shelter, as if to save themselves from being scalped. One day a noise was heard, of whirring wings and harsh shrike cries. I got to the door in time to see Mimus darting off after Mr. Shrike just as the latter was flying up into the cypress house. These two birds had several pitched battles during the succeeding week. The shrike must have then deserted the grounds in dispair because he could not master Mimus. The shrike may have been one of a pair I had turned loose several months before. I had had them caged for study, and they had remained about the place sometime after being released.

Mocky spent most of his time in the pepper trees and in the cypress house on rainy days, but on fair ones he would not fail to come to the brush in answer to a few whistles. He had gotten to know our calls and seemed to feel under obligation to answer them by making a prompt appearance. As the warmer days of February came on, his song was given oftener and grew more varied and sweeter. Maybe he was trying to call a mate from out of the blue, for when singing he would continually turn his head over to one side, looking up into the sky.

March 4 was one of those balmy spring days that moves the winter birds to restlessness. They will often tarry till evening and then between dusk and dawn depart for their summer homes. Our mockingbird was now bubbling over with his spring cheer; all day he kept it up; only it was a good-bye song. For that night he took wing for his nesting place, who knows where! The next day knew him not about the brush heap; it was silent without his melody; only the wrens, kinglets and sparrows were left to wonder why he had so suddenly deserted their happy band.

Haywards, California.

"Atratus versus Megalonyx"

BY ROBERT RIDGWAY

AN article from me on the present subject would obviously have been more appropriate soon after Mr. Grinnell first questioned the validity of *Pipilo maculatus atratus* (Condor, IV, Jan., 1902, 23); I have been very busy, however, and besides had quite forgotten the matter until it was brought to mind by Mr. Swarth's recent article (Condor, VII, Nov., 1905, 171). That both Mr. Grinnell and Mr. Swarth are in error in concluding that *Pipilo maculatus atratus* is synonymous with *P. m. megalonyx*, I feel quite sure, and will here state my reasons for this conviction.

Because the type of *Pipilo maculatus* Baird came from Fort Tejon, and the breeding black *Pipilo* of that locality is the form which I described as *P. maculatus atratus*, it of course *seems* logical to assume that both names represent the same form. But it is very unsafe to assume anything in scientific matters. It is by no means an uncommon occurrence (I could cite several instances) for a new species to be first taken at a place far outside its normal range. Whether the occurrence of the Rocky Mountain or plateau form of this species at Fort Tejon, as a winter visitant or straggler, is abnormal or not, I am not able to say; but that the type of *Pipilo megalonyx* is not only a typical example but almost an extreme example of the form re-named by Mr. Swarth *Pipilo maculatus montanus* I have no doubt, having recently re-examined it and carefully compared it with the reasonably good series of *P. m. atratus* and very extensive one of "*P. m. montanus*" in the National Museum collection.

Mr. Swarth's paper is an exceedingly able one and shows most clearly the difference between the two forms and their distribution, and I much regret that my long silence in the matter may have been the cause of his adding another synonym to the literature of North American birds.

Whether *P. m. atratus* is sufficiently distinct from *P. m. falcifer*, however, I am not so sure, since I have not been able to examine a sufficient series of the latter.

Washington, D. C.

Oceanodroma leucorhoa and Its Relatives on the Pacific Coast

BY W. OTTO EMERSON

THE petrels, or "sea-patters," have always been of particular interest to the ornithologist tho relatively little seems to be known as yet concerning the species on our coast and especially their distribution.

The early western explorers gave the name *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* to the white-rumped petrels found by them on this coast; but as this name was first applied to birds of the Atlantic (St. Kilda), and as the specimens examined by me from the Pacific seem to all differ from Atlantic *leucorhoa*, it seems probable that the lattter name must be dropped from our western lists.

The first departure came when W. E. Bryant described *O. macrodactyla* from Guadalupe Island (Bull. Cal. Ac. Sc. II, July 1887, p. 450); and as far as is yet known this very distinct species is restricted to that immediate vicinity.

Next, A. W. Anthony described from the waters adjacent to Lower California, *O. kaedingi* (Auk XV, Jan. 1898, p. 37). In reviewing the material before me (27 skins) referable to this species, I find the average measurements to be less than those given by Anthony. His type measured (millimeters reduced to inches): wing 5.72, tail 3.26, fork of tail 0.41, tarsus 0.81. My series averages: wing 5.54, tail 2.84, fork of tail 0.46, tarsus 0.72. The size of *kaedingi* is thus very much less than in any of the other forms of the *leucorhoa* group. In color, *kaedingi* is much the darker, being dark sooty brown over the whole body, while the head is dark plumbeous. The rectrices are sooty thruout, or else but very slightly paler at the base. However, the tip of the inner web of outer tail-feather is often paler, forming a noticeable spot in 83% of my specimens. I have found this character in no other case, excepting one Atlantic skin (No. 94,554 U. S. N. M.), and in that one only on one outer rectrix. The tail in *kaedingi* is less deeply forked than in the more northern Pacific Coast forms, and the head is dark plumbeous, not ashy. This petrel ranges from the vicinity of Guadalupe Island north along the coast of southern California. It would seem from the material before me, that there remain two forms from the Pacific Coast worthy of recognition by name, as follows:

Oceanodroma beali new species.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERS—Similar to *O. leucorhoa*, but of uniformly smaller size.

TYPE—♂ adult, No. 1440 Coll. J. Grinnell; Sitka Bay, Alaska; August 5, 1896. ♀ adult, No. 1438 Coll. J. G. (same place and date).

MEASUREMENTS—♂, wing 5.90, tail 3.10, forking of tail 0.80, tarsus 0,87. ♀, wing 5.75, tail 3.10, forking of tail 0.70, tarsus 0.90.

COLORATION—Sooty brown, darkest above; head, lower throat and back washed with plumbeous; forehead and chin smoke gray; greater and median wing-coverts light smoke gray; upper tail-coverts white with black shafts; lateral lower tail-coverts edged with white; rectrices black with white at base.

RANGE—North Pacific Ocean, south to Prince of Wales Island. Breeds on Aleutian and Copper Islands and on islets in Sitka Bay, Alaska.

NOTE—I take pleasure in naming this far northern petrel in honor of one who is doing so much of value in working out the economic standing of our Pacific Coast birds: Prof. F. E. L. Beal, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Oceanodroma beldingi new species.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERS—Similar to *O. beali*, but decidedly grayer, and averaging notably smaller in length of wing and tail.

TYPE—No. 53, Coll. Herman T. Bohlman; Netarts Bay, coast of Oregon; June 6, 1901.

MEASUREMENTS—Average of 5 specimens: wing 5.65, tail 3.22, forking of tail 0.67, tarsus 0.78.

COLORATION—Uniform sooty brown, washed with a bluish slate-gray on head, throat, chest and back, the gray most pronounced on head and chest; forehead, chin and upper throat decidedly ashy; greater and median wing-coverts edged with ashy; upper tail coverts white with black shafts; lateral lower coverts edged with whitish; rectrices black with white at base.

RANGE—North Pacific Coast, from Vancouver Island to northern California. Breeds on coast of Oregon (Wm. Finley), and Mendocino County, California (W. H. Dall).

NOTE—I name this handsome new petrel in honor of our veteran California ornithologist, and Honorary member of the Cooper Ornithological Club, Mr. Lyman Belding.

		Wing	Tail	Forking of Tail	Tarsus
O. leucorhoa	average	6.34	3.44	.70	.91
Atlantic Coast	largest	6.35	3.35	.90	.90
27 skins	smallest	5.85	3.20	.75	.90
O. beali	average	5.91	3.67	.72	.84
Alaskan Coast	largest	5.80	3.05	.46	.70
27 skins	smallest	5.60	2.95	.65	.80
O. kaedingi	average	5.54	2.84	.46	.72
Guadalupe Island	largest	5.80	3.05	.46	.70
27 skins	smallest	5.45	2.45	.40	.75

Two petrels from off the coast of San Mateo County, south of San Francisco, are referable to *O. kaedingi* and may possibly be the same form as was found

breeding on the Farallone Islands by Mr. Loomis, July 7, 1896, tho I did not happen to find it there on my visits in 1885-87. The above two specimens measure respectively: ♂, wing 6.00, tail 3.25, forking of tail, 0.55, tarsus 0.95; ♀, wing 6.10, tail 3.25, forking of tail 0.58, tarsus 0.90. Not having access to any other material from California, I cannot at present say anything in regard to the relation of the Farallone birds to either *kaedingi* or *beldingi*.

I wish to thank Mr. Robert Ridgway for the opportunity of examining the fine series of Atlantic Coast *leucorhoa* in the U. S. National Museum. I am also indebted to the Carnegie Museum for the loan of the series of *kaedingi* from the Anthony collection. To Messrs. Grinnell, Mailliard and Bohlman, I am under obligation for similar kindnesses rendered.

Haywards, Cal.

Methods of Filing Reprints

RICHARD C. MCGREGOR

SOONER or later in the development of a private scientific library, reprints become so numerous that much time is expended in looking for particular papers unless some simple system is employed in filing them. I propose to describe one or two methods of filing such papers in the hope that others will give us some ideas on the subject. The essential conditions to be fulfilled are that any given title shall be readily accessible and that the papers shall be preserved from injury.

In the early stages of a library's growth papers may be classed by authors or by regions and each set kept in a heavy Manila paper envelope. Author's name and list of contained titles should be written on one corner of the envelope. This is practically the same system as that fostered by literary supply companies who manufacture light wooden boxes, size of a book, open on one side, in which pamphlets are kept. The boxes stand on one end like so many books; titles of the contained papers are written on the back.

Neither of the above systems are satisfactory. The papers are subject to misplacement and may even be lost, and they become worn and soiled in handling.

There remain, however, two methods, both of which have been found excellent and each has its followers. I will describe each of these briefly.

First: Cut heavy Manila paper in two or three sizes to fit folio, octavo, etc., when folded once. Now furnish each pamphlet with one of these covers and give it a number in the corner. The title and author may also be written on the cover. The covered pamphlets are now to be set on end in deep drawers or in boxes of suitable sizes. With a card index of authors, any paper desired may be easily found. Papers kept in this way might be arranged alphabetically by authors and the card index done away with. This method is a very good one and commends itself on account of its cheapness and the fact that papers may be added one or many at a time.

Second: Have papers of a similar size bound together in book form whenever enough accumulate to make a conveniently sized volume. Papers may be

sorted somewhat as to subjects and authors. The volumes are numbered consecutively and the papers of each volume are numbered. Any paper is found by means of a card index giving number of volume and number of paper. If a volume contains papers by one or a few authors their names may be printed on the back, as well as the general subject treated in the volume, and at the bottom the name of owner. The first three volumes of such a series might have backs marked as follows:

MEXICAN BIRDS	EVOLUTION	FISHES
1	2	3
Brewster	*Cope*	*Everman*
Nelson	*Jordan*	*Garman*
Ridgway		*Gill*
SMITH	SMITH	SMITH

This method commends itself by reason of the facts, that the papers are well protected, a volume is not so easily mislaid as a small pamphlet, and the pages having been cut in binding, are more easily run thru in order to locate a given paragraph. This method is more expensive than the first, but the greater convenience is well worth the additional cost.

I have given the two systems a pretty thoro test side by side, working with one set of papers bound and another equal number of papers unbound, and for convenience the bound volume is away ahead of the bunch of loose papers.

I hope the above notes will call forth additional remarks on the subject.

Manila, P. I.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Birds Whose Notes Are Imitated by the Western Mockingbird.—For the past three years I have made observations on the song of the western mockingbird in the vicinity of Pasadena and find in every instance that they imitate the commonest and most noisy birds of the locality. A striking proof of this was noted on Santa Catalina Island in the early part of last April. The western flycatcher was very numerous and in full song and as a result the mockingbirds of the Island were imitating it freely, something I have never known a mainland mockingbird to do.

In addition to the notes of other birds, the mockingbird utters several scolding notes which are strictly its own, but these are seldom heard in the regular song. There are quite a number of notes which I have been unable to place as yet. However, I think the following list will convey an approximate idea of the birds mimicked by *Mimus polyglottos leucopterus* in this region.

Western gull (Santa Catalina Island), killdeer, valley partridge, sparrow hawk, California woodpecker, red-shafted flicker, ash-throated flycatcher, Say phœbe, black phœbe, western wood pewee, western flycatcher (Santa Catalina Island), California jay, western meadowlark, Arizona hooded oriole, Bullock oriole, Brewer blackbird, San Diego song sparrow, black-headed grosbeak, western tanager, western martin, cliff swallow, phainopepla, California shrike, western gnatcatcher, dwarf hermit thrush, western robin.—C. H. Richardson, Jr., *Pasadena, Cal.*

A Novel Find.—In November, 1905, a California condor's egg was found in Sespe Valley, back of Nordhoff, California. The egg was uninjured, but the contents were dried up. The nest-cave was in a huge ledge of rocks facing towards the south, the egg was found accidentally by a party of campers climbing about the rocks, and is one of the greatest pieces of luck I ever heard of; for who has found even so common an egg as that of the turkey vulture in the middle of November on an exposed ledge?—WILLIAM GALLAHER, *Santa Barbara, Cal.*

Pacific Kittiwake in Southern California.—On January 9, 1906, a specimen of the Pacific Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla pollicaris*) was picked up dead at Playa del Rey, one of the new beach resorts between Redondo and Santa Monica. The bird was forwarded to me by a friend, and proved to be a female in first winter plumage (No. 7487 Coll. J. G). It was very lean, and somewhat emaciated, tho no direct cause of death could be determined. I think this is the first recorded instance for Los Angeles County.—J. GRINNELL, *Pasadena, Cal.*

Cannibalism in Owls.—On March 21, 1905, Dr. Wm. Bebb of this city, kindly gave me a female specimen of *Syrnium occidentale* (spotted owl) which was killed on the Old Wilson Peak trail near here. Upon dissection, the stomach was found to contain remains of a pygmy owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*), a portion of the skull enabling me to positively identify it. The spotted owl was taken about 6 P. M., and judging from the freshness of the stomach contents, the pygmy owl could not have been captured any great length of time. The case of "owl eat owl" is not a new one, but it would be of interest to determine which species is the greatest offender.—C. H. RICHARDSON, JR., *Pasadena, Cal.*

New Bird for Amador County.—On August 28, 1905, while driving in the western end of the County, near Carbondale, I saw a roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*). My brother and I collected in Amador County during four years without ever seeing the roadrunner, and as far as I know this is the first record of its occurrence in that region.—GEO. L. KAEDING, *Goldfield, Nevada.*

A Small Egg.—An average-sized hummingbird egg is a small and delicate thing. After examining several hundred sets and records of many more I concluded that an adnormal hummer's egg was something unheard of.

However, on June 11 of last year, while strolling along the bottom of a heavily wooded canyon near Escondido, a female hummer was flushed from the low limbs of a small live oak. Closer investigation by my brother proved that her nest was placed on a small twig about five feet from the ground. "One fresh egg," was the first report; then, "O! Gee! Look at the runt!" And sure enough there was the smallest egg I had ever seen just partially visible among the yellow down and feathers which lined the nest.

The bird was secured and proved to be a very small Costa (*Calypte costæ*), measuring about 3.40 inches in length.

After much speculation as to the possibility of blowing so small an egg I succeeded in making a fine specimen of it. It measured .29 x .21 inches and contained no yolk. The other egg was slightly incubated and measured .50 x .33 inches.

May I ask, has anyone else so small an egg? If so I would like to hear of it.—NELSON CARPENTER, *Stanford University, Cal.*

Pacific Eider in Washington.—The Pacific eider (*Somateria v-nigra*) has been reported from the vicinity of Tacoma off and on this winter since early December. Only one has been shot, this being reported to me as "looking like a hen mallard, only much larger with a heavier bill"; evidently a female. I went down to the Nisqually flats, 18 miles from Tacoma, on January 6, and had the good fortune to see a flock of seven eiders, besides a pair of females. The latter I approached within 80 yards as they were feeding in a slough, but they were very wild, and I failed to secure any.—J. H. BOWLES, *Tacoma, Wash.*

A Correction.—Thru an inadequate knowledge of the two species, and altogether too hasty identification on my part, *Oreospiza chlorura* was noted as *Aimophila ruficeps* in my "List of Summer Birds of the Piute Mountains, California", THE CONDOR, Vol. VI. No. 5, page 136. Acknowledging my mistake, I wish here to offer a correction for the same.—C. H. RICHARDSON, JR., *Pasadena, Cal.*

Foolish Introduction of Foreign Birds.—On March 4, 1905, a specimen of the European Chaffinch (*Fringilla cœlebs* Linnæus) was obtained at the Presidio of Monterey, California. Chaplain Joseph Clemens, who has become well acquainted with the native birds of the vicinity during his several years' residence at Monterey and Pacific Grove, caught the peculiar call-note of the stranger, and after assuring himself that this was no ordinary bird, hastened to secure a weapon. The bird was finally re-located in a pine and was shot, the skin being forwarded to me by Mr. Clemens for determination. I was completely non-plussed, as nothing like it had ever come into my collecting experience, and I was also unable to place it from the keys in any of my books on American birds. Moreover, it showed no marks of captivity nor any abnormal feature of the plumage.

I finally sent the bird to Dr. Richmond of our National Museum at Washington, and he promptly cleared up the mystery by informing me that "it is a Chaffinch, sometimes called Bachelor Finch, *Fringilla cœlebs* Linnaeus. It is an abundant European species, and extends to central Asia, or thereabouts, but does not occur in China or Japan [that is, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean]. Although the specimen shows no evidences of cage life, it has no business to be at large in this country, particularly on the Pacific Coast, and I have no doubt it escaped from captivity, or was purposely liberated, probably with other species. Not many months ago we received for identification a Chinese Myna, shot in British Columbia, which had every appearance of being a wild bird."

Dr. Richmond's suggestion that the chaffinch at Monterey could be easily accounted for as a bird purposely liberated by some person or society, at once appealed to me as the best explanation of the occurrence. It reminded me of the occasional notices we see in newspapers to the effect that Mr. So-and-So, or Such-and-Such Society "has recently liberated an importation of foreign songsters, which is a great public benefaction in that it will doubtless add to the bird-life so sparse in California." (!) It occurs to me that bird students should take pains to curtail the popular spread of this idea that the importation and release of foreign birds is desirable. It may even be dangerous.

The matter is so important that it has been the subject of special legislation by our Government. I wrote to Dr. T. S. Palmer of the U. S. Department of Agriculture on this subject and he replies as follows: "You may be interested to know that in South Australia the chaffinch, which was introduced some years ago with other European birds, is now considered such an undesirable species that under the game law of 1900 it is included in the list of injurious birds and denied protection.

"So far as I am aware there is no law to prevent any one from liberating birds already in his possession, but the matter can be readily regulated in another way. Section 2 of the Lacey Act requires permits for all foreign birds imported into the United States and prohibits the importation of such as the Secretary of Agriculture may declare injurious. By withholding permits or declaring injurious to agriculture species which are known to be destructive, importation of certain species can be stopped at any time. But as we do not wish to resort to extreme measures unless absolutely necessary, several birds are now admitted as cage birds which might not be if the practice of liberating them became general."

Now we of the Cooper Club as observers and students of our native birds should take particular pains to guard against any such calamity as the establishment within our limits of any foreign species. The examples of the myna in the Pacific islands, the starling and chaffinch in Australia, and the English sparrow in America should be reminders of the possibly direful results of transplanting species. Liberation of foreign birds can be but lost labor anyway. Of course in the great majority of cases the birds die harmlessly within a longer or shorter time on account of the radically new conditions of food and climate which they are physically unable to meet. But the occasional exception which actually thrives and becomes established is bound to crowd out some native species. For we may safely presume that there are just as many birds in any locality as the food-supply at the season of extremest shortage can support. There would be a larger population if there were more to eat at all times of the year here, or, in the case of migrants, here and elsewhere.

I, for one, do not want to see our native avifauna disturbed any more than the cultivation and settlement of the country necessitates. Personally, I would try my best to shoot any interloper I should meet with, simply to destroy it. This may be purely an æsthetic viewpoint. But there is the practical economic side, as well.

Dr. Palmer (U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.) would be pleased to hear from anyone who knows definitely of either the contemplated or accomplished importation of birds from anywhere for liberation.—J. GRINNELL, *Pasadena, Cal.*

THE CONDOR

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NOTES AND NEWS

For the present all communications intended for the Northern Division, C. O. C., or for the Club-at-Large, should be addressed to the care of Mr. Joseph Mailliard, 1815 Vallejo St., San Francisco, and *not* to C. S. Thompson.

Messrs. Finley and Bohlman are in southern California for the spring months to continue their work in bird photography. They are bending their energies to secure a life-series of the osprey, bald eagle and condor. A pair of condors is being watched in the locality where a young one was successfully raised last season. Several Cooper Club members are jealously guarding the secret, and woe betide the person who tries to "collect" either the egg or the birds!

Mr. Harry Lelande spent a week in early February at Calexico, in the Imperial Valley below Salton. He reports the region to be swarming with water birds, due to the overflow from the Colorado.

Mr. Harold Gay spent the past summer and fall in Lower California looking after mining interests. While there he obtained the eggs of a number of rare birds, upon which he has promised to base an article or two for THE CONDOR. Mr. Gay met with Nelson and Goldman in the San Pedro Martir region, and reports them to be having their usual success in securing valuable mammals, birds, reptiles, etc., for the Biological Survey.

It is with pleasure that we are privileged to announce the prospective return to California of Mr. Bradshaw H. Swales, lately of Detroit, but for several years in the 90's one of our Southern Division, C. O. C., members. Mr. Swales has been doing much sound work with the birds of Michigan, and we are sorry that the Michigan Ornithological Club will lose so energetic a worker; but what is their loss, will be most emphatically our gain!

Mr. Bradford Torrey of Wellesley Hills, Mass., is spending the winter in southern California, having undertaken the journey for the sole purpose of extending his acquaintance among the birds. Thru the use of the field glass alone he is having remarkable success. *By patient and persistent search he has located and studied such an elusive bird as the rufous-crowned sparrow, which but few of even our resident bird students have succeeded in detecting. Mr. Torrey is an accurate observer, and an entertaining writer as well, a combination which is altogether rare.* He is the author of several popular books on eastern birds. We have asked that he write up some of his *impressions of western bird-life for a future issue of* THE CONDOR.

The above is from a photograph of the silver loving cup presented by the Club to Walter K. Fisher as a token of appreciation for his services as editor of THE CONDOR. The cup was designed by W. Otto Emerson and executed by Shreve & Co., San Francisco, and represents a condor's egg-shell supported between two condors. The latter stand 6½ inches high upon a silver base. The inscription reads:

Walter K. Fisher
In Remembrance
from the
Cooper Ornithological Club
1903-1905

At the Annual Dinner of the Northern Division, January 13, 1906, Mr. Emerson made an appropriate presentation speech, which was responded to feelingly by Mr. Fisher. The entire incident was one to be long remembered with pleasure by all present.

Mr. W. B. Judson reports finding a western

meadowlark's nest with full complement of eggs, near Los Angeles, on February 7, this being by nearly a month the earliest nesting date of the species for this locality.

Doubleday, Page & Company, of New York, will shortly issue an illustrated book on western bird-life from the pen and camera of Mr. Wm. L. Finley. The book will be written in a popular vein, and will consist of intimate camera and note-book studies of certain common birds that the everyday observer is liable to meet with. Mr. Finley has met with decided success in his lecture and magazine work, and we are confident that his book will be received as enthusiastically. We understand, moreover, that there will follow in course of a year or so a much more pretentious volume dealing in a scientific way with the life-histories of the rarer birds of the Pacific Coast. This will occupy a place in our ornithological literature as yet wholly vacant, and all Cooper Club members should lend every aid in their power to Messrs. Finley and Bohlman in their field-work with the camera.

Mr. H. R. Taylor has recently secured by purchase the entire oological collection of Rev. J. M. Carroll of Waco, Texas, together with cabinets, trays and "good will." The latter gentleman finds it necessary to devote his time to a field of activity which will probably cause his removal from Waco. The collection is an exceptionally fine one, well prepared, and with some "great" variations in the series. Mr. Taylor now owns probably the most extensive oological collection on the coast.

Mr. Wilmot W. Brown, Jr., of Cambridge, Mass., is in southern California for a few month's collecting, having just returned from a successful trip into the Yaqui country of Sonora. He intends to visit some of the Santa Barbara Islands, and if a suitable vessel can be chartered, Guadalupe Island off the Lower California coast. Mr. Brown is famous for his many years of field work in South America, where he has discovered over 100 species of birds, and a great many new mammals. By dint of extreme courage and energy he has penetrated into the most remote districts, discovering such remarkable novelties as the white-tailed hummingbird, from the Santa Marta region, figured in a colored plate in the April, 1899, *Auk*. Mr. Brown's work is pursued wholly thru his love of collecting, tho he works partly in the interests of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Cambridge, and of Mr. Outram Bangs, the latter gentleman publishing most of the results.

A party of students from the biological department of Throop Institute, Pasadena, will spend the spring vacation in the San Gabriel Canyon near Azusa. A base camp will be established, and a region of known area within a short radius will be as thoroly and repeatedly canvassed as time permits, so as to obtain a census of the bird population. From this it is hoped to get an approximate estimate of the numbers of individuals of each characteristic species in the foot-hill district of Los Angeles County.

We have heard again from Malcolm P. Anderson who is in Asia collecting natural history material for the British Museum. He has just finished a trip thru Korea where much of interest in the line of mammals was obtained. A paper is about to appear in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London, dealing with Mr. Anderson's two years' work in Japan. Altho longing to return to the United States, Mr. Anderson says he expects to remain abroad a year or two longer.

Mr. Carroll Scott of the Southern Division, C. O. C., has located for the year at a Nevada mining camp 16 miles southeast of Searchlight. In spite of its being an extremely desert region, Mr. Scott has found much of interest in his surroundings, including 33 species of birds. Several of the latter are of peculiar interest, such as the Leconte thrasher and Scott oriole. The Club will expect a full report upon this remote region as soon after Mr. Scott's return as he has time to work up his notes and material.

George F. Breninger, widely known as a collector and taxidermist, died Dec. 3, 1905, at Phœnix, Arizona. The cause of his death was paralysis which resulted directly from arsenic poisoning incurred while preparing specimens. We have been informed by Mrs. Breninger that his library and collections are for sale.

Minutes of Club Meetings

SOUTHERN DIVISION

JANUARY.—The annual meeting of the Southern Division was held January 25, 1906, at the home of Mr. H. J. Lelande, in Los Angeles, with eighteen members present.

Applications for membership from Bradshaw H. Swales, of Detroit, Mich., and Olga S. Tarbell, of Pasadena, Cal., were presented, and the resignation of Edmund M. Hayden was accepted.

The election of officers for 1906, resulted in the election of: O. W. Howard, President; W. B. Judson, Vice-President; J. Eugene Law, Secretary; W. Lee Chambers, Treasurer.

A motion thanking Mr. Clifton, the retiring Secretary, for his untiring efforts in the interests of the Club was enthusiastically carried, and Mr. Clifton thanked the Club for its assistance in responding with papers and places for meetings.

Mr. Lelande gave a short resume of the observations at the October Outing meeting, and named 47 varieties of birds observed in the vicinity of Newhall in the two days outing.

After this, the Club adjourned to the dining room to a very sumptuous spread, which met with universal approval and a hearty vote of thanks from all present.

J. EUGENE LAW, Secretary.